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Spotlight on John Birch Society

The John Birch society, along with its views and those of its founder, Robert W. Welch, are proper matters for public attention and concern.

They have been getting it from newspapers and congressmen and others who are startled by both the extreme ideas the group professes and its conspiratorial techniques. Leading newspapers have been investigating Welch's views and the activities of his society on the grounds that the radical right can be every bit as dangerous to the country as the radical left. Among the newspapers that have been highly critical are the Chicago Daily News, the Des Moines Register, the Christian Science Monitor, the Baltimore Sun, the New York Herald Tribune and the Toledo Blade.

Welch has expressed such ridiculous opinions that one wonders how he gets such persons to listen to them. He claims that our top leaders since before World War II were either used by Communists or were Communists—Franklin D. Roosevelt, Harry S. Truman, George Catlett Marshall, Dwight D. Eisenhower, Milton Eisenhower, John Foster Dulles, Allen W. Dulles, Arthur Dean. The list goes on and on.

He advocates the use of techniques common to communism and fascism—not Americanism—the imposition of absolute loyalty to himself; use of loaded questions or those with untrue imputations (he himself calls this "mean and dirty" but advises it); infiltration of PTA's, civic groups, school boards; organization of "fronts" to head up such things as the current movement to impeach Chief Justice Warren; establishment of bookshops and lending libraries as "fronts" for distribution of right wing literature.

These techniques, and others, Welch advocates as part of putting "the softening process of wonder and doubt at work."

Democracy, he says in the world's most successful democracy, "is merely a deceptive phrase, a weapon of demagoguery and a perennial fraud."

This man and this kind of program have brought presumably responsible citizens into the society. In many places they have used anonymous phone calls, threat of boycott, and fear to divide communities and intimidate citizens.

Some society members try to divorce their own views from those of Welch. They claim that he is too extreme—that they cannot go along with much of what he says. But how can anyone follow him in anything, in view of the over-all tone of his beliefs?

The activities of the John Birch society and the ideas of Welch deserve to be spread over the country—put out in the open where they can draw the scorn they deserve.